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ABSTRACT

In every society there are predictable and normative events, often connected to biological change, that demand personal change from the individual. In contrast with these are other critical life events, less predictable and less prevalent, that place extreme demands on the individual for personal change and adaptation. These extraordinary events include intercultural transitions, particularly those associated with international migration. In recent years the need for research on this type of life transition has increased, largely as a result of significant changes in immigration trends and the ethnocultural mix of the nation's population. A multifaceted, complex, and consequential event, intercultural migration poses special challenges as the subject of scientific inquiry, even as it provides a unique window for viewing processes of change and adaptation. Some of these needs, challenges, and opportunities are identified in this paper, and discussed in the context of research perspectives and the constructs of change. (Contains 77 references.) (Author/SLD)

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RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON CONSTRUCTS OF CHANGE: INTERCULTURAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSITIONS

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Princeton, New Jersey
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Abstract

In every society there are certain important life events that are predictable and normative therein and that demand from the individual some major and lasting personal change; they are often--but not always--connected with a biological change of life (e.g., puberty, graduations, maturity, parenthood, retirement). In contrast to these transitions, there also exist other critical life events, which are less prevalent and less predictable, and which place extreme demands on the individual for personal change and adaptation. These extraordinary experiences include intercultural transitions, particularly those associated with international migration. In recent years, the need for research attention to this type of life transition in individual development has increased, largely as a result of significant changes in immigration trends and in the ethnocultural mix of the nation's population. A multifaceted, complex, and consequential event, intercultural migration poses special challenges as a subject of scientific inquiry. At the same time, it provides a unique window for viewing processes of change and adaptation. In this paper some of these needs, challenges, and opportunities are identified and discussed in the context of varied research perspectives and constructs of change.

Research Perspectives on Constructs of Change: Intercultural Migration and Developmental Transitions

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Introduction

In number and complexity, the processes and other variables involved in human migration are so vast that one is soon overwhelmed when one attempts to consider more than a relatively few at a time. Further, migration is an event that can be, and is, studied by many disciplines--each one focusing on a particular aspect of the event, each one using its own distinct methodology and epistemology. Thus migration research is simultaneously the province of demography, public policy, sociology, psychology, education, anthropology, public health, and many more specialized fields of study--each one able to illuminate only a part of the event. This characteristic makes migration an ideal focus for encouraging multidisciplinary research and interdisciplinary collaboration.[1] To this end, comprehensive conceptual models, such as the one I have elsewhere (Laosa, 1990b; see also Rogler, 1994) proposed for the study of human development in the context of intercultural migration, are best thought of as just that, conceptual models, rather than hypothetical or analytic models. In this sense, the function of a conceptual model is to help identify and stimulate thinking about relevant domains of variables and about the plausible ways in which they may be interrelated and organized. Used in this way, a comprehensive conceptual model becomes a powerful multidisciplinary heuristic device. The process is reminiscent of

how widely people differ from each other in what they perceive in a Rorschach inkblot. Thus, developmental psychologists think of migration in a manner radically different from--but complementary to--that of, say, social demographers or economists regarding the same model. Indeed, they diverge profoundly with respect to the aspects of migration they consider interesting and significant, the research questions or hypotheses they deem relevant, the variables that attract and hold their attention, the units and levels of analysis on which they concentrate, and the manner in which they analyze and interpret data. For the individual researcher, this fact is both a blessing and a daunting complication--the former because of the attendant enrichment of the topic, the latter because few people are trained in more than one discipline or specialty.

In the face of this dilemma, the proper next step is to formulate a hypothetical model by selecting realistically from the conceptual model a circumscribed set of elements (variables, research questions, hypotheses) that can be appropriately studied in a single study.[2] Finally, the need for an analytic model compels the researcher to operationalize and hone the chosen variables into precise empirical measures and effective data collection procedures, and to decide how to analyze the resulting data in order to test the hypotheses, or answer the research questions, articulated in the hypothetical model. Scientific progress is largely the accretion of the advancing knowledge resulting from these individual efforts and from the corresponding restructuring of the existing body of knowledge, so that over time more and more of the constituent elements of a comprehensive conceptual model are elucidated.

Unlike other types of event, international migration typically involves individuals' making some form of change, or transition, across different cultures, or societies--a change that can occur at any point in the course of the individuals' development. For these reasons, international migration poses special challenges as a subject of scientific inquiry. At the same time, and for the same reasons, it presents unique research opportunities. Some of these challenges and opportunities are identified and discussed in this paper. The aim is to stimulate and help organize scientific thinking about these significant life events and transitions.

Developmental Perspective and Cultural Relativity

The study of culture change in individuals has seldom been approached from a developmental perspective. This lack is not surprising, because comprehensive conceptions of human development are typically so complex that when one attempts to superimpose them on the similarly intricate issues pertaining to migration and its sociocultural contexts, one raises to a daunting level the difficulty of the challenges the topic poses to research. The chief concern of scientists who study the development of human behavior is to provide information about the history and growth of individuals' behavior and the functions and causes of behavior--in short, what develops and when, how, and why (e.g., Bornstein & Lamb, 1992; Bornstein & Lerner, 1992; Hartup & van Lieshout, 1995; Parke, Ornstein, Rieser, & Zahn-Waxler, 1994); to complete this list toward a fuller account of human behavior and development, Church (1961) added information about how people feel about what they do. More broadly, the overarching goal of psychological research is to understand and explain why individuals think, feel, act, and react as they do in real life (Magnusson, 1990). To this

end, models restricted to a contemporaneous perspective are intended to account for individuals' functioning in terms of their current psychological or biological dispositions (or both) and environmental circumstances. In contrast, developmental models are formulated to explain current functioning in terms of those aspects of the individual and the environment that are involved in the individual's developmental history, and how they led to the present way of functioning (Hall & Lindzey, 1978; Magnusson, 1990). The two perspectives are complementary; both are needed.

As is generally true of scientific constructs in all disciplines, development is not a straightforward empirical concept but rather a postulate; as such, there is no general consensus on a single conception of development. Whether development has occurred in any given instance is ascertained by whether the features of the data fit an implicit or explicit concept (e.g., metatheory, paradigm) of what development entails (see, for example, Bornstein & Lamb, 1992; Bornstein & Lerner, 1992; Emmerich, 1968, 1977; Loevinger, 1976, 1987; Parke et al., 1994; Piaget, 1983; Wainryb, 1993; White, 1983). In addition to these within-culture, within-discipline variations in conceptions of development, there is an increasing recognition among developmental psychologists in North America that patterns and norms of human development previously thought to be universal are instead specific to their own culture, that different cultures value different developmental trajectories, and that particular trajectories arise as adaptations to environmental circumstances (e.g., Greenfield 1993; Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Laosa, 1979/1989, 1990a, 1990b, 1991; Rogoff, 1990; Serpell, 1992; Valsiner, 1995). Thus Greenfield (1994)--a leading North American developmental psychologist--recognized that "the dominant knowledge base of current

developmental psychology comes from Euro-American researchers studying the development of children from their own cultural experience. Significantly, a largely unacknowledged consequence is that our developmental knowledge is primarily knowledge of the acquisition of Euro-American culture as this process transpires in the United States" (pp. x). There is, therefore, as she pointed out, a need for interaction with a wider international community of researchers that can "provide perspectives on goals, conditions, and paths of development that differ from those we too often take for granted" (p. ix).

As an interpretive model for rendering intelligible the apparent cultural diversity in human behavior and development, cultural relativism differs from cultural universalism and cultural evolutionism. A universalist approach emphasizes general likenesses and overlooks specific differences. A problem with this stance is, as Shweder and Bourne (1984) cautioned, that universals can be "discovered" (a) by moving to a level of discourse so general that the generality becomes trivial or (b) by restricting the analysis to a subset of the possible evidence. An evolutionist approach, on the other hand, rank-orders variety into a sequence of lower to higher (e. g., primitive to advanced, incipient to elaborated) by locating a normative model (such as Piaget's cognitive stages or Kohlberg's moral development stages, for example), by treating the normative model as the endpoint of development, and by describing the observed cultural variability as steps on a ladder progressively moving in the direction of the normative endpoint (Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1990).

Viewed from the perspective of cultural relativism, each culture is composed of unique patterns that determine and give meaning to human behavior, to its function, and to its causes (Laosa, 1979/1989; Shweder & Bourne, 1984; Spiro, 1990; Wittkower & Dubreuil, 1977). As such, for each culture there is a unique what, when, how, and why of human development. Concerning the question of whether cultural variations are susceptible to judgments regarding their relative worth, Spiro (1984) distinguished between descriptive and normative relativism. Descriptive cultural relativism does not address this question. Normative cultural relativism holds that, because there are no transcultural standards by which differences between cultures can be validly evaluated, there is no way by which their relative worth can be judged (Spiro, 1984, 1990).

When carried to its logical conclusion, cultural relativism poses a serious dilemma for science: The uniqueness of each culture makes comparisons between cultures difficult or impossible. On the one hand, it is important to understand a culture from its native point of view (emic approach). On the other hand, in order to make scientific cross-cultural comparisons possible, it is necessary that the emic approach be complemented by studies in terms of general scientific concepts (etic approach). When applied to the study of human development, the etic approach calls for analysis of cross-cultural variability along dimensions of development defined and calibrated by European-American standards.[3] These standards have been chosen because the "mainstream" field of human development--and, indeed, science itself--has its roots in European cultures. Ideally, it should be possible to gain an understanding of any culture from both the emic and the etic points of view. This centrist aspiration

is reflected, for example, in the work of psychological anthropologist R. A. LeVine (1984, 1990). In reality, however, few developmental scientists are sufficiently steeped in cultures different from their own. In any case, it can be seen that cultural relativism can pose knotty philosophical and methodological (and political) problems for the study of intercultural transitions. These problems revolve around the question (answers to which are beyond the scope of this discussion), Should immigrants' development be evaluated by the emic (culture of origin) approach or by the etic approach or by both?

Regardless of the differences in conceptions, however, the subject-matter of research on human development is, as Wohlwill (1970, p. 151) concisely described it, "behavior change taking place as the individual grows from birth to old age, or more particularly the properties and characteristics of these changes and the variables governing them." Transitional periods in an individual's life provide unique windows for viewing the organism as it undergoes change; the study of such events can lead to insights into the factors that promote the maintenance or reorganization of patterns of functioning in individuals over time (Brim & Kagan, 1980; Caspi & Bem, 1990; Connell & Furman, 1984; Rogler, 1994). In recent years, because of this recognition, the study of life transitions has attracted a growing interest in the behavioral, social, and health sciences and in education (e.g., Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Greenfield, 1994; Hetherington & Arasteh, 1988; McCollum, 1990; Miller, 1989; Seidman, Allen, Aber, Mitchell, & Feinman, 1994; Tapia Uribe, LeVine, & LeVine, 1994; Thurber, 1995).

Life Passages

All human societies expect or require their members to undergo some distinct forms of experience, or normative events, that mark or demand from the individual some major and lasting personal change--a transformation that alters, in a profound but typically orderly and predictable manner, the individual and the individual's relations to the other members of the society. Recognizing these occurrences, scholars seeking to understand human behavior have long been interested in the study of rites of passage--ceremonial events, existing in varied forms in all historically known societies, that mark the transition of an individual from one social status to another (Herdt, 1990; Norbeck, 1992; Whiting, 1990). Their worldwide distribution, particularly as they occur in traditional societies, has long attracted the attention of anthropologists and folklorists. In contemporary, technologically and scientifically oriented societies, passage rites tend to be secularized and appear to be less elaborately developed than those observed in many traditional societies, but they nevertheless continue to play important social, cultural, and psychological functions (Norbeck, 1992). In the United States, major normative life-transitions include, for example, the child's entry into school, graduating from high school, leaving the parental residence; the college-bound student's entering higher education; the young adult's beginning gainful employment, forming a family; and job retirement.

Rites of passage can serve important sociological and psychological functions that pertain to group solidarity versus disorder and that allay personal anxiety over the stresses surrounding the change. Many of these passages bear a connection with a biological change of life--birth, weaning, maturity, reproduction, death--but others

celebrate or mark changes that are wholly cultural (Benedict, 1934). As Norbeck (1992) and others have noted, less scholarly attention has been given to the psychological than to the social or cultural aspects of passage rites, because scholars focusing on such rites have typically been anthropologists oriented toward sociocultural interpretations. Nevertheless, psychological aspects of rites enter strongly, if often implicitly, into anthropological interpretations. For example, passage rites reinforce and often create emotional ties to other members of society, personal identification with social groups and with specific statuses, and commitment to group ideology; they also serve as blueprints of social relations and of acceptable behavior (see, e.g., Herdt, 1990; Whiting, 1990). Thus, where particular social statuses have special honor and prestige, "the mere existence of these statuses offers opportunities for gaining psychological satisfaction, and the requirements for gaining these statuses serve to guide behavior in socially approved channels that offer psychological satisfaction" (Norbeck, 1992, p. 802; see also, e.g., Whiting, 1990). Considerable emotion is typically invested in these events. When anxiety is induced by the beliefs surrounding the passage rites, they may be said both to create and to allay anxiety. Psychological interpretations of rites have emphasized their value in allaying personal anxiety. In this regard, note has been made of the psychotherapeutic value of passage rites surrounding events in which stress may be acute (see, for example, Laosa, 1990a, pp. 238-240; Prince, 1980, pp. 320-321, for research reviews). In short, the social and psychological value of rites appears substantial. Unfortunately, the cultural circumstances in the United States are such that passage rites seem to be declining and poorly developed compared with those of many traditional cultures.

In contrast to changes of the normative type, such as those discussed above, there also exist other forms of life transition, which are less prevalent but highly significant and profound in their impact. These transitions, which have received less research attention, are linked to events that tend to occur unpredictably and that result in uprooting, in the loss of family or friends and possessions, and, in many cases, in intense and prolonged mental suffering. These extraordinary occurrences include international migration and its attendant life alterations. These events place extreme demands on the individual for personal change and adaptation. As such, they represent critical life changes that involve potentially stressful processes in development as well as extraordinary opportunities for personal growth.

After reading accounts and interpretations of rites of passage in various cultures, one ponders about analogous mechanisms that might exist around intercultural transitions. Over a half-century ago, anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1934) suggested that in order to understand traditions surrounding life changes "we do not most need analyses of the necessary nature of rites de passage; we need rather to know what is identified in different cultures with the beginning of [the new role that the passage intends to mark] and their methods of admitting to the new status" (p. 36). In other words, her emphasis seems to have been on the need to identify the meaning of the individual's new role in the particular culture. In this regard, Benedict's point is well taken, notwithstanding the justifiable criticisms that have been directed at other implications of her overall theoretical position (i.e., that culture is personality; LeVine, 1973, p. 55). In pursuing this line of inquiry, however, it is necessary to keep in mind Church's (1961) reminder that, in any culture, "rituals and institutions lose their original

meanings, or once-functional practices survive as rituals, so that it is not easy to derive the psychological life of a people directly from cultural forms" (p. 137). It is also necessary to keep in mind that, although culture influences social structure, social organization, and social behavior, culture per se does not consist of them, because the latter have noncultural (e.g., economic, political, situational) as well as cultural determinants--according to one anthropological theory of culture (e.g., Spiro, 1984). The psychologist interested in cultural factors is, as Church lamented, at a disadvantage, since anthropology is not a branch of psychology and the material collected by anthropologists does not always lend itself to psychological analysis.

The foregoing discussion prompts the suggestion that one potentially worthwhile direction for future research is to focus on the meaning that being a member of a particular immigrant or ethnic group holds (psychological and otherwise) for both the individual and the larger society. In this regard, one cannot escape the irony in the history of shifting patterns of public opinion and of policy debates concerning what to do with new entrants to this country. Opponents of generous immigration policies traditionally charged that newcomers were mentally deficient and thus unfit for the mental rigors of a competitive economy compared with the native-born (see Laosa, 1984, 1995, respectively for a historical overview and a discussion of current issues concerning the debate over intelligence testing). Whereas this argument was quickly defused by the astonishing success of certain groups, controversies over university admission quotas have subsequently been fueled in part by nativists' apprehensions that the newcomers' successes would limit the native-

borns' opportunities for education and financial aid if applications were rated strictly according to intellectual qualifications (Kraut, 1990).

The next section of the paper brings forward certain conceptual issues that bear on the study of change and that have particular relevance for research on human development in the context of intercultural migration.

Life Events, Changes, and Transitions

Among the many and varied conceptions of what constitutes human development (see, for example, Baltes & Nesselroade, 1979; Bornstein & Lamb, 1992; Brim & Kagan, 1980; Emmerich, 1968, 1977; Laosa, 1979/1989; Loevinger, 1976, 1987; Parke et al., 1994; Piaget, 1983; White, 1983; Wohlwill, 1973), one emerging view recognizes that human beings generally undergo periods of relative stability and periods of marked change or transition, that important changes occur throughout the entire life span, and that many individuals retain a great capacity for change (Brim & Kagan, 1980). Scientifically, these transitions are regarded as times when major reorganizations or discontinuities may occur; they have also been described as periods of "ceasing" and "becoming" (Connell & Furman, 1984, p.154). In contrast, periods of relative stability are characterized by continuities, which broadly speaking refer to "connectedness in development, to the linkage of early behavior to later behavior" (Emde & Harmon, 1984, p. 3). Typically, however, the concept of transition has been surrounded by ambiguity; the term is used in a variety of ways and given varied interpretations. Thus, as some writers have observed, transitions can be defined by time periods in the life span, by role changes, by internal transformations in

the individual, or by external events (e.g., Bronfenbrenner & Crouter, 1983; Connell & Furman, 1984; Emmerich, 1968; Reese & Smyer, 1983).

It is helpful, therefore, to think of transitions in terms of some broad types. To this end, Connell and Furman (1984) offered a practical typology of major properties of life transitions, thus providing a useful vocabulary for considering these experiences. A transition thus refers to "the occurrence of relatively greater change in a characteristic or set of characteristics of an individual or of a group of individuals" (p. 154). The altered characteristic may reside at the level of overt behavior, in an underlying attribute, or in the structural or organizational properties of the person. Simple change from one age to another does not constitute sufficient evidence that a transition is occurring; instead, "the relative magnitude of change in a hypothesized transition would have to be shown to be greater than the relative magnitude of change when a transition is not underway" (p. 164). Of special significance, this conception distinguishes a transitional event, namely the instigation of the transition, from the transitional period, the duration of the transition. Simply stated, a transitional event or change initiates a period of change.

The transitional event may be exogenous, that is, occurrences or changes in the social ecology, such as migrating, entering school, or the death of a significant other; or endogenous, that is, internal events or changes in psychological or physiological processes, such as the hormonal alterations of adolescence or the discovery of a terminal disease (Connell & Furman, 1984). This distinction between endogenous and exogenous event types gains significance when transitions are considered from a developmental perspective. The distinction brings forward, for

example, the consideration that the timing of the event--that is, the point in the course of the individual's psychological or biological development at which the transitional event occurs--may influence the characteristics of the transitional period and the consequent changes in the individual (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Laosa, 1979/1989). The other side of the coin is that the nonoccurrence of an event--such as an immigrant adolescent's lack of opportunity to date others from a shared cultural background, for example--too, can trigger a transition. Some events or forms of experience may be necessary for maintaining periods of stability (Connell & Furman, 1984).

The aforementioned conception of transitional events bears some similarity to the traditional idea of life events (Hultsch & Plemons, 1979), but the two constructs differ in important regards: If one thinks of life events as external, objective events, the two terms differ because (a) transitional events include endogenous events and (b) life events are typically thought of as occasions for change or reconstitution in an individual's characteristics; if a "relatively greater change does not occur following the event, that event would not be considered a transitional event" (Connell & Furman, 1984, p. 155). For instance, a change in school settings may or may not be followed by change in a child's pattern of functioning. There is thus some circularity in the Connell-Furman definition; theoretically, however, this apparent circularity seems warranted in light of the many factors that may give meaning to an event (see, for example, Laosa, 1979/1989, 1990b; Reese & Smyer, 1983, concerning differences in event meaning).

The duration and timing of the transitional period are additional conceptual differentiations that contribute specificity to the framework. With regard to duration,

the transitional period may be brief, but it is reasonable to expect the span of marked change in intercultural transitions to extend over years and in some cases indefinitely and even throughout life. Connell and Furman (1984) suggested that extended periods will most likely occur when the transitional event precipitates multiple effects or when these effects in turn initiate further changes. As to the timing of its manifestation, not always does the transitional period occur immediately after the event, as the cases of delayed and inhibited grief reactions illustrate (Carr, 1985; DiMatteo, 1991; Gonda, 1989). On the other hand, the transitional period may begin prior to the event itself. Sociologists have named this occurrence anticipatory socialization, defined as the patterned, but often unplanned, learning of a role in advance of assuming it (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Kolker & Ahmed, 1980; Pruchno, Blow, & Smyer 1989). An illustration can be drawn from research on young children whose "school readiness" may depend on the degree of continuity between the home and the school (Laosa, 1982, 1993; Laosa & Henderson, 1991). Thus, an immigrant family, concerned about their young child's readiness to assume the role of student, may informally provide in the home the kinds of stimulation that can trigger a developmental transition in the child. One may argue that the transitional event in this case is not the school entry but rather the family's concern about the child's school readiness. Anticipatory socialization can thus facilitate role transitions. Similarly, however, experiencing the world through the eyes of others can serve as a negative instance of anticipatory socialization. For example, children born in this country to an immigrant couple may come to perceive themselves as having little control over their own lives as adult workers (a self-perception that may engender ineffectual modes of coping) as

a consequence of living with parents who realistically perceive themselves in this way because they experience anti-immigrant discrimination in the work place. As these illustrations demonstrate, caution is warranted when attempting to pinpoint the causal events in transitions, since an objective, discrete event might not be the precise marker of the occurrence, length, or timing of a transitional period (Connell & Furman, 1984; Pruchno et al., 1989; Reese & Smyer, 1983).

Levels of Analysis

Although development may be studied at three different foci, or levels of analysis, psychological research has tended to focus on the level of the individual, typically to the exclusion of the other two levels, the sociocultural and the institutional; conversely, other social science disciplines tend to focus largely on the last two levels. This compartmentalization may continue only at the peril of ignoring factors that can help explain significant aspects of human behavior and development.

Granted, combining more than one level or unit of analysis in a single study is difficult to accomplish. It is not surprising, therefore, that efforts in this direction have generally been limited or problematic. Instances of these problems can be seen, for example, in research on acculturation (see Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991, for a review of acculturation research). Studies of acculturation sometimes suffer from conceptual ambiguity because conceptions that pertain to the group level are applied to variables at the level of the individual. There is a need for conceptual models of human development that incorporate multiple levels of analysis--as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model does, for example--and for empirical research designed to illuminate such models.

For conceptual and hypothetical models of development that incorporate multiple levels of analysis, it is important that the corresponding analytic models--i.e., the statistical model-fitting approach--take account of the hierarchies, or nested structures, reflected by the various levels, since insufficiency in this accounting can result in inefficient and inconsistent parameter estimates. Needed for this purpose are data analytic models that take hierarchical structure into account by making it possible to incorporate variables from several levels. Until recently, fitting such quantitative multilevel models was technically impossible, although sophisticated analysts have often found ways to cope at least partially in specific instances. With recent developments in the statistical theory for estimating hierarchical linear models, an integrated set of techniques now exists that permits efficient estimation for a wider range of applications (e.g., Bock, 1989; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Goldstein, 1987; Goldstein & McDonald, 1988; Mislevy, 1995; Raudenbush & Willms, 1991). In this sense, the barriers to the use of an explicit hierarchical modeling framework have now been removed. These statistical techniques make it possible to test hypotheses about relations among variables occurring at each level and relations across levels and also to assess the variation at each level. Bryk and Raudenbush (1992), who refer to this class of analytic techniques as hierarchical linear models, noted that they appear in diverse literatures and are variously called multilevel linear models (in sociological research and educational evaluation), mixed-effects models, random-effects models (in biometric analysis), random-coefficient regression models (in econometrics), and covariance components models (in the statistics literature). Multilevel analysis is thus an area of burgeoning interest and active development. These developments may

hold promise as analytic tools for use in empirical research on human development and intercultural transitions. Hierarchical linear models are certainly not a solution to all the data analysis problems that investigators presently face in this research area--for this purpose they are far too limited (de Leeuw, 1992)--but they are a step toward a more realistic statistical representation of the complexities involved in human development as it occurs in its diverse and layered ecological contexts.

In sum, this paper has given the reader a glimpse of some of the complex and difficult challenges posed by the scientific study of international migration, particularly when this theme is approached from a developmental perspective. Transitional periods in life--such as those that surround migration--provide unique windows of opportunity for the study of individuals as they undergo change and adaptation. By facing such challenges, and by drawing upon these opportunities, the behavioral and social sciences can significantly advance our knowledge and understanding of the critical life transitions and stresses that surround intercultural migration, and of the extraordinary--yet too often insufficiently tapped--opportunities they present for productive personal growth. The challenges are being faced, efforts are underway.

Coda

Significantly, the basic questions that concern the field of human development represent expressions of fundamental inquiry about human existence that have engaged serious thinkers in all cultures through the ages. The theme was given eloquent expression in a one-act play by the Nobel laureate Anglo-Irish author, critic, and playwright Samuel Beckett (Krapp's last tape). The character in the play is a man of advanced age who listens to his confessions recorded on audiotape in earlier (and

happier) years. This portrayal becomes an image of the mystery and wonder of individual human development: For the elderly man, the voice of his younger self is that of a total stranger.

No less accurate than Wohlwill's definition of scientific research on human development, quoted earlier in this paper, the following lines by Latin American poet, essayist, and short-story writer Jorge Luis Borges (Sheehy, 1976) capture, in characteristic poetic fashion, the essence of the question guiding this enterprise:

What web is this

of will be, is, and was?

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Footnotes

[1]I make a defining distinction between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary work. A multidisciplinary study, investigation, or program of research (see footnote 2) approaches a particular topic or theme from the perspectives of varied disciplines. Interdisciplinary research, or collaboration, is conducted jointly by researchers from varied disciplines, each researcher typically representing a single discipline; the study, investigation, or program of research resulting from the collaboration may be either multidisciplinary or unidisciplinary.

[2]Although the terms study and investigation are often used interchangeably, I make the following defining distinctions: An investigation is a research project that planfully comprises closely interrelated studies focused on the same specific topic or general research question. A program of research, a broader term, refers to a series of research projects (investigations or studies or both) expressly and systematically undertaken--typically in sequence--on the same more or less general theme.

[3]It is not the intention here to imply that the etic approach can occur only in studies conducted from perspectives with roots in European cultures. The etic approach can conceivably occur also in studies based on other cultural perspectives.